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from Mount Hood, and of other indications of activity being displayed by the great cones which are such conspicuous objects to those passing up and down the Columbia. These stories, when not intentional fabrications, may perhaps be attributed to the fact that sometimes on clear days the moisture in the air blowing from the ocean is condensed around the cool, snow-covered summits of the cones, so as to have somewhat the appearance to a not very critical eye of clouds of vapor issuing from them. We obtained pretty satisfactory testimony that Mount Hood at least had shown no signs of activity during the past eight or ten years.

There are also most conflicting statements with regard to the condition of the volcanoes through British Columbia and Alaska. Thus Scrope, a careful and trustworthy authority, says of Mount St. Elias, that it has certainly been seen in eruption, while Grewingk, a well-known geologist who explored that region and carefully examined all the published authorities on the subject, declares that none of these volcanoes — St. Elias, Edgecombe, Fairweather, etc. — have been active during the historical period, or, at least, that there is no evidence of any such activity.

J. D. WHITNEY.

ART. IX.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *The Pre-Columbian Discovery of America by the Northmen, illustrated by Translations from the Icelandic Sagas. Edited, with Notes and a General Introduction, by B. F. DE COSTA.* Albany: Joel Munsell. 1868.

MORE than thirty years ago the hope was expressed in this Review that the interesting documents relating to the discovery of America by the Northmen, which had just been published in the *Antiquitates Americanæ*, might be put into an English dress, and prepared for the perusal of the general reader. In the following year appeared the work of Mr. Joshua Toulmin Smith, "The Northmen in New England, or America in the Tenth Century." To heighten the interest of the subject, Mr. Smith threw his discussion into the form of dialogue; but

his vivacity proved so oppressive that, in spite of the undeniable ingenuity with which he handled his argument, his book was soon as completely forgotten as Greenland had been during the seventeenth century. Three years later a translation, by Beamish, of the Sagas relating to the discovery of America was published in London. In 1844, the well-known translation of the *Heimskringla*, by Mr. Samuel Laing, appeared. Mr. Laing, who had his own opinion about the Northern antiquaries, placed in an appendix the eight chapters which, in the opinion of the critics, had been interpolated in Peringskiöld's edition. The original authorities, on which rests the claim of the Northmen to be regarded as the discoverers of the New World, have therefore been for a long time within the reach of the English reader. Still there remained ample room for a new work, in which all the original documents might be brought together and carefully collated, and the reasons for receiving them as authentic, and as anterior to the time of Columbus, clearly exhibited. Notwithstanding the ridicule which fell upon the absurd speculations of the Northern antiquaries respecting the Old Stone Mill and the Deighton Rock, and notwithstanding the inaccurate paragraph which Mr. Bancroft suffers to remain at the beginning of his history, most men are by this time satisfied that the Northmen must have possessed some acquaintance with this continent. But the precise grounds for this generally accepted conclusion few would be able to give, and a thorough and impartial investigation of the whole subject, showing exactly how much has been proved and by what kind of evidence, would be a most valuable and welcome addition to our historical literature.

In a work which has recently appeared from the well-known press of Mr. Munsell, a laudable attempt has been made to supply this deficiency. Mr. De Costa has collected every passage in the Scandinavian Sagas which relates to the discovery of the New World, giving in part translations of his own and in part translations of Mr. Laing's. Some of his extracts are wholly new in an English dress. He very properly begins with the Sagas relating to the discovery of Gunnbiörn's Rocks, which led to the first voyage of Eric the Red to Greenland. These extracts are from *Grönlands Historiske Mindesmærker*. After this follow the Saga of Eric relating to the discovery of Greenland, and the Saga of Biarne Heriulfsson. Next are given the Sagas of the three sons of Eric, — Leif, Thorvald, and Thorstein. The most important and interesting of all the Sagas — that of Thorfinn Karlsefne — stands next in order, and the voyage of Freydis, the sister of Leif, concludes this part of the work. That the reader may be put in possession of all that relates to the subject, the doubtful account of the voyage of Are Marson to Great Ireland, the allusions to later voyages found in an-

cient manuscripts, and some geographical fragments in which reference is made to Vinland, are grouped at the end of the book.

Mr. De Costa has not confined himself to giving these narratives in a single form. Thus, of Eric's discovery of Greenland we have three distinct accounts, the first being derived from the *Antiquitates Americanæ*, the other two from the *Historiske Mindesmærker*. Of the voyage of Biorne we have two versions, derived from the same sources. The Saga of Leif the Fortunate, who is fairly entitled to the glory of having first set foot on the New World, is given in three versions, — one, the longer form, as given by Mr. Laing, the other two very brief. The Saga of Thorfinn is also given in three versions, as they are printed in the *Antiquitates Americanæ*. All Mr. Laing's translations are reprinted by Mr. De Costa; but Mr. Laing, as his work was simply a translation of Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle, and not a treatise on the discovery of America, very properly confined himself to giving the Sagas as they had been printed by Peringskiöld, by whom, as is now agreed, they were taken from the *Codex Flatoiensis*. But in this manuscript the very important Saga of Thorfinn appears only in a brief form. The fuller account of Thorfinn is derived from a manuscript in Arne Magnussen's collection, and is translated by Mr. De Costa from the *Antiquitates Americanæ*. Hence we have much more than a reprint of Mr. Laing.

But while we have every disposition to commend Mr. De Costa's industry and zeal, we are sorry to feel obliged to say that his work by no means supplies the deficiency that has so long existed. The most that we can say in favor of his labors is that he has given us the original authorities in an English dress. Of the original matter which he has contributed we can express no very high opinion. His Introduction is ambitious in its style and irrelevant in its matter, and betrays an entire misconception of the problem he had to solve. Surely these simple tales of adventurous discovery are not invested with any increased authority by the statement that "before the plains of Europe, or ever the peaks of Chonmalarie, rose above the primeval seas, the continent of America emerged from the watery waste that encircled the whole globe, and became the scene of animate life." One might not unreasonably infer from such a sentence that we were about to trace the discoveries of men who were contemporaries, not of Hugh Capet, but of the dwellers in the bone-cave of Aurignac, or the original owner of the Neanderthal skull. Mr. De Costa relinquishes, with evident reluctance, the Deighton Rock and the Newport Mill, but he more than offsets his discretion on this point by a labored attempt to prove that the island which was seen by Leif, as he sailed by that

part of Vinland which was afterwards named by Thorfinn *Wunderstrand*, and which was identified by Professor Rafn with Nantucket, was nothing else than the Isle Nauset, which formerly existed on the coast of Cape Cod, but has long since disappeared. In the same spirit, treating these Sagas precisely as though they were the log-book of a Cunard steamer, he persists in following the Northmen up the Seaconnet passage, and into Mount Hope Bay. To do this, he is obliged to transform this broad expanse of salt water into a lake, and gravely assures us that it not only has this appearance to the traveller passing it by rail, but is often called so, — a statement which, we venture to say, will astound those who have lived by it all their lives. With the same resolute determination to make out a case, the pretty eminence, less than two hundred feet in height, near which King Philip met his death, and which to the eye scarcely breaks the line of the horizon, is not only made a mountain, but is connected with the stupendous range known as the Milton Hills! And this application of language is gravely imputed to men fresh from the snow-crowned summits of Iceland, and the inaccessible cliffs of Greenland.

We had thought that the time for this laborious trifling had gone by. The Sagas which describe the discovery of Vinland, though not originally a part of the *Heimskringla*, are now admitted by all competent scholars to belong to the same class of compositions. That they were not adopted by Snorro into his great work will be regarded as no evidence whatever against their authenticity, when we bear in mind that his work was a chronicle of the Kings of Norway, and that he was in no way concerned with a subject the importance of which was not at that time at all understood. The style of all these Sagas is that of the twelfth century; they must therefore have been committed to writing in their present form at a period certainly as early as that in which the *Heimskringla* was composed. Like that extraordinary composition, they belong to that epoch in the development of Scandinavian literature when the Skaldic songs were beginning to give place to prose composition. In his Preface, Snorro Sturleson, giving the sources from which he had drawn, says that they were old stories, as he had heard them told by intelligent people. Some things, he says, were found in old family registers, and part "is written down after old songs and ballads which our forefathers had for their amusement." Accordingly, at the close of the fifth paragraph of the *Ynlinga Saga* he introduces a quotation from Brage the Old. Nor was it only when treating of a mythological period that the historian made use of these old songs. In the *Saga of King Olaf Tryggvesson*, in whose reign Leif the Fortunate made his famous voyage to Vinland, there occur no less than fifty-five quotations

from old songs of the Skalds, some of them of considerable length. In fact no one can examine the history of Snorro Sturleson without seeing that it must be, to a considerable extent, simply a prose rendering of old ballads, in which the traditions of the nation had been enshrined. Now the Sagas which relate to the discovery of America show precisely the same characteristics. Thus, when Thorhall was carrying water to his ship, he sang a song; and, when he and his companions were about to sail north around Wonderstrand, they sang again; and both these songs are preserved in the Saga of Thorfinn. So, when Thorfinn's people chased the uniped they sang. Who can doubt that these verses, instead of being songs that were actually sung on those occasions, were but fragments of the original ballad of which the narratives are merely prose abridgments, and that these portions chanced to be preserved simply because they struck the ear of the later annalist?

With this view of the nature of these old Sagas (and we do not see how any one who gives the least attention to what Snorro Sturleson says can take any other), the absurdity of treating them as Mr. De Costa persists in doing is manifest. Nobody doubts their substantial truthfulness. Nobody, so far as we know, would deny that they describe occurrences which actually took place. Mr. Bancroft could hardly have gone wider of the mark than when he asserted that these narratives are mythological in form, for there is not a single element of proper mythology mixed up with them. We think that Mr. Freeman, in his recent *History of the Norman Conquest*, a good deal overstates the matter when he speaks of the "half-fabulous narratives in the Norwegian Sagas." A story may be exaggerated and inexact, and yet fall very far short of being half-fabulous. We think there is every reason to believe that those who wrote the Sagas of Eric and his sons, and of Thorfinn Karlsefne, as well as Snorro Sturleson, aimed to tell the simple truth, as they had heard it told to them. But we must bear in mind what the sources were whence their information was derived. The expeditions of Eric and of Thorfinn were made at the close of the tenth or very early in the eleventh century. The famous "Flato" manuscript, in which the earliest account of these expeditions is preserved, was written between the years 1387 and 1389. There are, however, internal reasons for supposing that they were reduced to their present form during the twelfth century. But granting this much, more than a century must have elapsed before they passed from the form of oral tradition. These traditions, no doubt carefully preserved and handed down, were derived, in the first instance, from the reports which the voyagers themselves brought back. But how precise were these?

Did the voyagers keep an accurate log? Were they always careful to note how many days they drifted? In short, are we to assume the literal exactness of every statement in these Sagas? This some writers — and Mr. De Costa must be counted among the most persistent of the number — insist on doing. Not content with the general proposition that the Northmen visited our coasts, he gravely remarks in his notes: "This Cape was evidently not Point Gilbert, but the terminus of Cape Cod, known as Race Point." "This was the bay situated between Point Gilbert and Isle Nauset." "This was Nantucket." He does not, however, press the coincidence between Mount Hope and the name of Hop, which Thorfinn gave his settlement. Even Rafn, whose faith was almost boundless, was a little staggered by the hypothesis that a tribe of Indians should have preserved for nearly six centuries the designation applied to a locality by a few wandering Norsemen. Of course the principal passage relied on by those who assert the possibility of a precise geographical determination of the discoveries of the Northmen is the statement in the Saga of Leif, that day and night were more equal in Vinland than in Greenland or Iceland: "for on the shortest day the sun was in the sky between Eyktarstad and the Dagmalastad." Mr. De Costa has a long note on this, giving the substance of the view advocated by Rafn and Finn Magnussen, which fixes the latitude of the place at $41^{\circ} 43' 10''$, being nearly that of Mount Hope Bay. The question is too intricate to be discussed in this place. Torfæus, confessedly the highest authority on the general subject of Northern antiquities, gives one interpretation: Peringskiöld, who, though a Swede, had the assistance, in preparing his translation, of Gudmund Olafsen, a learned Icelandic, gives another; while Schöning, whose edition of the *Heimskringla* — the first volume of which was published in 1777 — is altogether the best that has yet appeared, adopts still a third. The interpretation given in the *Antiquitates Americanæ* is substantially that of Schöning, who derived it from an Icelandic bishop. In the face of all these differences Mr. De Costa characteristically remarks, "Thus we know the position of the Icelandic settlement in New England." We submit, on the contrary, that even were the precise meaning of the two Icelandic words *Eyktarstad* and *Dagmalastad* ascertained beyond a doubt, which is by no means the fact, still such a statement, borrowed perhaps by an old legend from a still older song, could hardly be relied upon as the basis for an astronomical calculation. We are ready to admit that the passage proves that Leif and his companions wintered a good way south of Greenland; for otherwise there would be no way of accounting for the mention of the fact that there was such greater equality of days and nights than in Greenland; but we protest against apply-

ing the exact processes of science to the elucidation of a passage the etymological interpretation of which is still involved in so much obscurity. To us the whole discussion of the question in the *Antiquitates Americanae*, has quite too much the appearance of an afterthought. Would the learned editors of that invaluable collection have been such sticklers for the old Stone Mill and the Deighton Rock?

We regret that Mr. De Costa did not give less attention to these details, and more to a broad presentation of the grounds on which these Sagas should be accepted as substantially historic. Such a presentation might easily be made, and made with convincing force. But the most important circumstance bearing upon the historical authority of the Sagas he only alludes to in the most incidental manner, and evidently with no appreciation of its importance. We refer to the fact that there are discrepancies between the Sagas relating to Eric and his sons and those relating to Thorfinn, of such a nature as to leave no doubt that they must have come to us from two wholly distinct sources. Torfaeus was the first to direct attention to these discrepancies, at the same time remarking that they were of a nature to confirm rather than disprove the statements. The Eric Sagas were evidently composed in Greenland, while those relating to Thorfinn had their origin in Iceland. The discrepancies are in themselves of very little consequence, but they serve to establish the important fact, that the Sagas of Eric and of Thorfinn must be received as two independent authorities. Had Mr. De Costa so arranged his book as to have brought this main fact distinctly before the reader's eye, he would have added very greatly to its value. As the Sagas are printed, there is nothing whatever to indicate that the Saga of Thorfinn has anything to distinguish it from those which precede it. And yet this distinction is the most important feature which a critical student would rely upon to establish the historical character of the testimony adduced. Coupled with this fact of the independence of the two accounts is the fact that there are many little points of agreement, undesigned coincidences, which also goes far to confirm the impression of their truthfulness. Mr. Joshua Toulmin Smith, as it seems to us, treated this part of the subject with a good deal of skill, and Mr. De Costa might have profited by his example.

We confess, also, to a feeling of some disappointment on finding that Mr. De Costa is able to give us the results of no more recent researches than those recorded in the *Antiquitates Americanae*. That work was published more than thirty years ago. *Grönlands Historiske Mindesmærker*, from which he has derived a portion of his material, appeared in 1838. Is it possible that the Danish antiquaries

have done nothing, for more than a generation, to illustrate this most interesting portion of their early history? If nothing whatever of importance has appeared since, at least the fact should have been stated. In some of his references to the earlier authorities, Mr. De Costa is not accurate. Thus, on p. 12, he quotes in a note from Torfaeus the statement that Greenland was first discovered by Gunnbiorn; but a reference to the passage in the *Gronlandia Antiqua* will show that Torfaeus, in this place, is simply quoting the language of an earlier writer. So, in his Introduction, he refers to this same work of Torfaeus as throwing much light on the early voyages of the Northmen to America. Now, we venture to say, that in the whole of the *Gronlandia Antiqua* there are not, at most, more than four or five allusions to Vinland, and these are hardly more than mentions of the name. The work of Torfaeus, in which the voyages of the Northmen are so thoroughly discussed that it may be questioned whether more recent investigations have added anything of value to his treatment of the subject, is the *Historia Vinlandiæ Antiquæ*, a volume which is classed by Professor Rafn as *inter rarissimos libros*, and seems wholly to have escaped Mr. De Costa's notice. We know, however, of at least two copies of this work which are not inaccessible to the historical student. These errors are of no great consequence, but they are errors which should not be found in a work devoted to the special discussion of a chapter of Scandinavian history.

2. — *Étude chronologique des Livres d'Esdras et de Néhémie*. Par F. DE SAULCY, de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. Paris. 1868.

M. DE SAULCY, the veteran numismatist and archæologist, has augmented the number of his monographs on Hebrew antiquities by a chronological *étude* on Ezra and Nehemiah, or, to speak more accurately, on the whole Persian period of Jewish history and a part of the following period. This elaborate, suggestive, and interesting essay, like all the other works of its distinguished author, is, as he informs us in a dedication to the Abbé Chauliac, the fruit of studies preparatory to the writing of a long-meditated history of the Maccabees. The materials from which the necessary data were to be drawn, M. de Saulcy justly complains, are in conflict "with each other, and sometimes with themselves," scanty, and rather inconclusive, the principal being: the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, and Zechariah; the Books of the Maccabees, both canonical and apocryphal; and the History of